

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1870.

Subject: The Substance of Christianity.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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- I. Watchfulness.
- II. Paul and Demetrius.
- III. Consolations of the Suffering of Christ.
- IV. Treasure that Cannot be Stolen
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ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE HAD.

THE SUBSTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”—*EPH. III. 17-19.*

This is a part of the prayer for the Ephesian disciples by Paul. How sublime it is! It reveals the very interior of Paul's heart, when he opened it to the sight of God. Philosophy never before or since sprang from such a court as this. For this is not the gush of mere enthusiasm. It is the enthusiastic utterance of the profoundest philosophy.

Here is the sum and substance of Christianity: *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.* It is the whole of Christianity; that is to say, it is the whole of it in the same way that an acorn is the whole of a tree. Out of that seed-form everything else will develop, according to that divine law which is divinely included in it. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know”—what? The whole nature of God? The whole science of human government? The whole moral theory of the world?—“and to know the love of Christ,” which passeth knowledge. That is, no intellection can ever follow the outgush of experience, and reproduce it in the form of ideas. While the intellect may interpret the experience of the heart, it after all stands afar off from it, and never can partake of the experience itself. It passes knowledge. “And to know the love of Christ, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” This is the very supreme of philosophy. It touches the lines and foundation elements of Christianity.

Christianity differs from all other religions, not in the fact that it commands a worship—for all do; not simply in the superior view which it gives of God; but by demanding a peculiar condition of heart toward Christ. Other religions demand reverence, and worship, and obedience, and uprightness—that is all. Christ is said to be “the end of the law.” In other words, that which the whole law means is comprised in him. Therefore it is said, again, that he is “the fulfilling of the law”—its whole outcome.

The old Jewish law had its secret spirit; but it was hidden in a vast system of forms. That spirit broke out in Christ Jesus in a living exposition of itself.

In winter there is scarcely a thing that is more homely than an apple-tree; but in June, when it is covered with blossoms, is there anything more exquisite than that same tree? That tree in winter is the old Jewish law. Christ is the old Jewish law all blossomed and coming to fruit.

I always feel sad when I think of a modern Jew, who loves the history of his fathers, and is proud of the name of *Hebrew*, and clings to the Old Testament Scriptures. He does not cling to them any more tightly than he ought to; but I feel sorry that he cheats himself of the right and part and lot that he has in the New Testament, which is but the unfolding of the principles and truths of the Old Testament. The Jew has as much right to the New Testament as we have. It is the property of the Hebrew, and is derived historically from the faith of the Hebrews. Christ was a Hebrew. The principles which he enunciated had already been enunciated in the faith of his fathers. And it seems to me that the Jews cling to the seed, and will not take the harvest which has grown from that seed, when they reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian religion is not a system of laws. It is a state of the heart. The Christian religion is not a philosophy of truth as it relates to man's nature and duty. It is a soul-life. It is not an inventory of truths as they existed before man came into the world, and will exist after he passes away. The Christian religion, in respect to each particular man who believes in it, is a state of facts in his own consciousness. *Christ in a man*—that is the Christian religion. It is Christ dwelling by love in his heart, or dwelling in his heart by faith. Out of this will grow many doctrines, and many inferences; but it is the seminal form, the germinant element, in Christianity. It is the personal relationship of the individual heart to the Lord Jesus Christ as its supreme Head and Lover. That not only makes a man a Christian, but brings him into the central point of the Christian system. Everywhere in the New Testament this one element stands forth—the personal identification of the human heart with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The forms of expression are as many and as rich as are the forms which vegetable life takes on in the tropics. All the occupations of life yield whatever they have in them that touches the heart, in figures, or in words (that are latent figures), to bring out this idea. All the habits of higher love, all the analogies of sustentation of life in the body; all civic, economic, juridical, domestic traits—these are borrowed

to expand and enforce this idea—the supremacy of allegiance and of love toward the Lord Jesus Christ, who is light; who is bread; who is water; who is wine; who is meat; who is the vine, we being the branches; who is the householder; who is the law-giver; who is the shepherd; who is the father; who is the friend; who is the lover; who is judge; who is leader; who is God over all, blessed forever, occasionally mounting up out of all these lower forms into this higher one. And whatever there is in day or in night that is sweet and soothing and nourishing to domestic love, is sanctified by being transferred to a higher function and use in the illustration of this noble experience of the soul of each individual man with its head, Jesus Christ. This heart-allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ is to each one of you all the Christianity that you can have.

Outside of personal experience, Christianity is but a pale reflex—a lunar rainbow—watery and faint colors produced by the light which the moon has borrowed from the sun, and which, compared with celestial rainbows, are scarcely worth looking at. All Christianity which does not include personal experience, is but a lunar rainbow; it takes the sun to make a rainbow that is worth looking at, and that any boy will try to chase. All Christianity that lies outside of the interpretation of personal experience, is, in common with all religions, every one of which has in it some particles of truth, defective in this regard.

There are three ways in which the New Testament recognizes Christ, as represented to us;—three instrumentalities by which we apprehend him, and come to a knowledge of him—the senses, the intellect, and the heart.

The primitive disciples came to Christ by sight. That mode was very much counted on in their day, and has been very much longed for since. We have, every one of us, doubtless, wished that we might once behold the Saviour in a dream that we could believe to be a revelatory dream; and still more that we might see him as an angelic presence. To *see* the Lord was considered among the apostles as being so important that Paul himself said, in an argument to one of the churches, "Have I not *seen* him?" He was met by the envies and jealousies which prevailed even among the apostles. He was made to be inferior to the others because he came in afterwards, and had not consorted with the Lord in companionship; and he said, "Nevertheless, I saw him when I was converted. When, going to Damascus, did he not appear to me? I have seen Him as well as the other apostles." A great deal was made of the fact of having beheld the personality of Christ. It is very grateful; but after all, it does not amount to as much as we are apt to think. They that had seen the Lord were not helped as much as many persons who had not seen him. The sov-

ereignty of Christian experience was not to be looked for in the earlier ages. There have been developments of Christ in human life far transcending the experience of the primitive church. In later days, there are many thousands who live by faith, and not by sight. Blessed are they who believe, not having seen—Christ himself being interpreter in that matter.

But Christ may be presented to us in a purely intellectual point of view. There is much in a divine person which the intellect takes cognizance of; and if we exercise without arrogance, and within due bounds, this capacity of intellectual apprehension, it is an aid—it is an important guide. More than that, there can be no perfect and enduring conception of Christ which does not involve in it, to a certain degree, an intellectual element. It is not the leading one; it ought not to be the prime one; but as an auxiliary, the presentation of Christ as he can be apprehended, or as any being can be apprehended, by the intellect, is of very great importance. This intellectual definiteness; the reduction of vague feeling to the form of ideas; the giving them some sort of order and proportion and emphasis—all this is a very important preparation for the heart's own work. It restrains feeling within its proper channels. The intellect exerts a salutary influence upon enthusiasm, which attempts to burn itself to ashes. When rightly used, the reason does not become the rival and the substitute of the feelings, but only their educator and their friend. It is the reason which enlarges and enriches and directs. The understanding and the feelings reciprocate. For no man can be well educated who has not in his intellect the color and the inspiration and the warmth that the sentiments and emotions give.

But the stress of Scripture is laid, not upon receiving Christ because we have seen him, nor upon receiving him because we understand him when he is expounded to us, but upon receiving him *by faith*. And this is the part of our text which I have emphasized—*"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."* This is the Pauline aspiration.

As Christ is not visible, he of course must be brought before us by the imagination. We cannot love nothing. We cannot love vacuity. There must be some conception of a thing before we can give our hearts out toward it. And if it is Christ that we love, or wish to love, there must be some conception of Christ. This is one mode of faith—namely, the power to reproduce that which the senses ordinarily see, but without the use of the senses. This is the exact definition that is given to it by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. "Faith," he says, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That power of the mind by which we bring definitely and

clearly before us invisible truths, whether they be truths of quality, truths of person, or truths of place, that power which enables us to see what the senses cannot see, is one mode or form of faith; but that is not its full form, as the term is freely used. For we find that faith is a generic, and that there are specifics in it. *Faith that works by love* is the faith that saves the soul and sanctifies the life. The largest and best way of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, is to take him in such a sense that our souls go out to him in the form of love. It is such a presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the imagination, to our minds, as draws forth toward him the soul's enthusiasm and secret life. It is the personal allegiance of love to Christ. A perception of his grandeur of nature, of his beauty, of his sympathy with us, of his supreme excellence in every part—such a perception that we clasp him with our feelings, that we put our souls wholly under his influence—this is receiving Christ by the heart.

There are three ways, then, by which Christ can be presented to us: 1. By the senses. That we shall not have again on earth. 2. By the intellect. That is the presentation of Christ doctrinally or theologically. 3. By the heart. That is the reception of Christ by the form of an actual experience; by such a coöperation of the reason with the imagination that we are able to bring the invisible person near to us, and so bountifully reproduce him, and so beautifully set him forth, that he becomes to us the "chiefest among ten thousand," and the "one altogether lovely;" so that every sweet thing in us goes out to him as every dew-drop in the sunshine evaporates and goes up toward the sun. This is receiving Christ by faith. It is not the rejecting of the senses; it is the non-using of them, rather. It is not the despising of the reason; it is an auxiliary use of the reason. But it is the manly way of taking hold of the Lord Jesus Christ by the enthusiasm of love, and making him the supreme object of our desire, and of our allegiance. This is receiving Christ by faith; and if we continue so to receive him, then he dwells in our hearts by faith—that is, by heart-sanctifying love.

This I understand to be the distinctive peculiarity of Christianity, not only, but that without which there cannot be any Christianity. There can be no Christianity to the man who does not personally take Christ by faith. There is no substitute for this personal experience, and there can be no system of Christianity which does not provide for this personal experience, toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

I remark, then, in view of this exposition, that,

1. Any system which leaves out the central figure is not Christian, and has no right to wear that name. It is not enough for any system of truth which is preached, that it thinks well of Christ, and sees in Him many estimable traits, and regards Him as a man

beyond all ordinary men, and something, perhaps, angelic—far up, it may be, above any other one that ever lived on earth. It is not enough to say that He revealed a higher ethical system than ever was revealed before, or gave a better basis for worship than ever was given before. This is all well; but it does not constitute Christianity. It does not make a Christian system. The thing that makes Christianity is the teaching of Christ as the object of supreme allegiance to every individual heart. It is the identification of the divine nature with your nature. That is the peculiarity of Christianity. Every man is a part of God by faith; and Christ is that God revealed, possible to apprehension, brought into sympathetic and enjoyable conditions, so that every human understanding can get hold of him. It is this enthusiastic identification of your personality with God's in Christ Jesus, that is the seal, the discriminating test, of Christianity. It is not worship. All things worship. It is not obedience. Obedience belongs to all systems. It is this personal fusion, this use of the Lord Jesus Christ to identify him with the experience of every living man, that makes men Christians, not only, but that constitutes the genius of Christianity.

Now, how superlatively, preposterously absurd, is that man who, calling himself Christian, teaches a system which derogates, which denies, which brings down and destroys, the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ, reducing Him to the level of a man! I do not undertake to say that there is not a point in philosophy where such a question may be raised; but the moment Christ is undeified—if he is undeified—that very moment the undeifier ought to give up the title of *Christian*. For Christianity consists in such an enthusiastic love of the individual human heart for Christ, that they are unified; that there is a substantial, indissoluble oneness between them as there is between the child and the parent; and that it is the cause of all the after life and action of the individual person. If that is denied, Christianity is denied. If Christ is so expounded that such an experience is impossible, Christianity is destroyed in the destruction of the very fundamental idea of Christ.

What, then, shall we think of Christians whose faith is that they do not believe in Christ? What is a Christianity out of which Christ is taken. If it were possible, by a very skillful surgical operation, to open the head of a man, and deftly take out his whole brain, and every particle of his nervous system, without destroying any other function, and close up the head, and have life go on, the man eating and sleeping and walking and working, what that body would be compared with a full man, that is Christianity when Christ is taken out, compared with Christianity when Christ is left in. And many men reason on this subject in such a way as almost leads one to suspect that this operation has been performed on them!

I say this not in any spirit of offence. I say it not in any spirit of controversy. I simply take the ground that there can be nothing more plain than the teaching in the New Testament, that Christianity consists in such a view of Christ as induces an enthusiastic and personal allegiance to Him; and that the destruction of that personal allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, is the destruction of the whole, so that there is nothing left. Christianity, when you have taken that away, is what a tree is when you have cut it off by the roots.

To still hold on to the name under such circumstances, is cowardly. It would be still more uncharitable to say that it is stupid. At any rate, it is either stupid or cowardly. To have destroyed everything in Christianity that makes it distinctive; to have obliterated its genius; to have put the fire of obliteration on the very point of vitality, and burned it out; and then to go on calling one's self a Christian for the sake of all the advantages which accrue from the prejudices of the community in favor of the name of *Christianity*—that is cowardly or stupid. It is far better that a man who is bound to give up the substance of Christianity should also give up the name, and take the name of *Theism* or *Naturalism*, or any other name that he pleases. But all those that believe in Christianity must, it seems to me, logically and joyfully go back to this one central truth, that Christ is God over all, blessed forever, and that the revelation of God in Christ is such a revelation as makes it possible for our hearts to rise up in communion with Christ, and clasp him with affection and fidelity, and make Him our Head and Center, our supreme All, forever and forever. Christianity is the permission of God to your soul, and my soul, to take Christ as our everlasting and adorable Friend.

2. As the Christian system is not held by those who leave out the central figure, so every Christian system is imperfectly held by those who only hold it in a philosophical form. This latter mode is far in advance of the former, which I have just been criticising; but still, the holding of the Lord Jesus Christ speculatively and philosophically, the teaching of Him only technically and psychologically in this way, is so imperfect a holding of Him that it cannot for a moment compare with the full-orbed glory of Christianity as it is set forth in the earliest narratives and teachings of the New Testament.

I would not underrate the value of an intellectual conception of Christ; but I would hold it as an auxiliary and as a guide. The intellect cannot fulfill the conditions of Christianity. It is the *heart* by which a man must believe unto salvation. It is not Christ as analyzed, as stated in technical terms, that ever will affect a man. I do not deny that it is very important that we should make exact statements. I affirm that Christians ought to have their religious life reduced, as far

as possible, to an intellectual expression. I affirm that intellectual expressions may, as fast as the light is given us, be coördinated and drawn out into a creed, or form of belief. Because creeds have been made instruments of oppression, and because they have been unwarrantably used, it does not follow that they are of no value. There is no man that ever feels, and feels definitely, who does not form a written or an unwritten creed. Every man that thinks has opinions; and if you have opinions on any subject, and they take on any order, that is a creed. Every man has a creed about his business. The way he thinks his business ought to be conducted is his commercial creed. If he teaches his son how to do business, he gives him a creed. If a man belongs to a political party he has a political creed. It is called a "platform;" but that is only another name for the same thing. Creeds are intellectual outlines, that are generally used, both in politics and religion, to deceive the mind with. Whatever sphere a man is in—whether he be a navigator, a musician, a painter, or something else—unless he is a mere enthusiast, his feelings, his enthusiasms even, convert themselves more or less facilely into ideas, and those ideas take on some order, and become the outlines of his opinions and beliefs. And these are his creed. Therefore, in every age of the world, the human mind has tended to formulate its intellectual beliefs.

What I object to is, the idea that any creed can really present to the human mind a clear and definite conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. That can be had only by the power of the Holy Spirit, so enlarging and inspiring the faculties of the soul that the soul itself shall by faith apprehend him. Every man must by the inflammation of his own heart-feelings find his Christ.

A creed is just like a philosopher's telescope. He sweeps the heavens to see if he can find the star for which he is searching; and by-and-by the glass brings it to his eye. The glass helps him; but it is not the glass that sees the star. It is the eye that does that. The glass is a mere instrument by which to identify the star, and magnify it, and bring it near, and shut off other things. A blind man could not see a heavenly body with a telescope, no matter how powerful it might be. A creed is a philosopher's telescope by which we identify philosophical truths, and magnify them, and bring them near; but it is the heart that is to apprehend them. It is the heart that is to interpret the things that are marked out by our creed or philosophy.

There is a great deal more importance in this than perhaps many are disposed to believe. It is this indiscriminate use of creeds that perplexes and confounds the mind of the community in times of controversy; in times such as existed a few hundred years ago in England; in times such as exist now in some parts of Europe. For instance,

where a man's life depended on his creed, Christians were warriors, and had business on hand. It is only two or three generations back, measuring by long-lived men's ages, when to deny the presence of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament was enough to destroy the strongest man, in England. Murder is not so fatal a crime in New York to-day (for it is not fatal at all to the murderer) as in Oxford or Cambridge, two hundred years ago, was the crime of those who believed in the Lord's Supper as you and I believe in it. It was a crime for which nothing less than fire and the ax were penalties. And at such a time a creed had a value in it. It was a weapon of offence and defence, both, which long since has ceased to be needed as such a weapon. Now we are clinging to a creed largely as a means of instruction. Used with moderation, it is of very great importance to instruct by. But if you suppose that you can ever do more with it than make it an auxiliary to faith, you are mistaken. You never can do more with it than to bring the heart into conjunction with an intellectual presence, and then you must resort to the help of the Holy Ghost. There is no further help to be given your soul. It must fight its own way with these helps up into the bosom of Christ, and learn what he is, and who he is, and what are the blessed sensations of love toward him. More than a creed is necessary.

3. The heart may embrace Christ with an enthusiasm of love, though the intellectual perception is imperfect and vague. It is better that the intellectual perception should be full and clear; nevertheless, a man can embrace Christ by the heart without the help of the understanding, far better than he can embrace Christ by the understanding without the aid of the heart. Thousands and thousands there have been, I believe, who have loved Christ, and have lived on their love to him, and have died by the power of that love, and have been translated to glory, though they could not have defined the divine nature, nor reduced their faith to any intellectual expression. There have been multitudes of children, poor uneducated persons, degraded negro minds, into whose teaching never entered even the technics of philosophy, who understood nothing of mental science, but whose hearts have seen Jesus Christ, and out of whose hearts has gone an enthusiasm, an allegiance, a fidelity, that has led them gloriously through life and through death to the blessed Master. They would have been larger and happier Christians, doubtless, if they had added to the heart element the intellectual element also; but it is possible for one to take hold of Christ with the heart. It is possible for one who has but slender endowments of reason to take hold of Christ.

And that is the peculiarity of Christianity. It is not a lore of philosophy which requires years and years of teaching, and which can

be taught only to men of genius. It does not require that a man should understand the whole theory of moral government, or that he should understand the psychology of the divine mind, before he can go to God through Christ Jesus. A child can go. A peasant can go. A blind-minded, ignorant man can go. The lowest and poorest can get hold of their God, though they cannot reason, and though they have but very little understanding. It is this peculiarity that makes the gospel of Christ a gospel for the poor; and that makes it a gospel for all ages, for all nations, and for all climes.

When, therefore, you insist upon it that a man shall accept Jesus Christ through the channels of a large understanding, you commit a serious error. If intellectual instruction becomes a part of your domestic training, it is all the better; but if meeting men as they are, untaught, unwashed, uncultured, uninspired, you find one saying, "I love the Lord Jesus Christ," and he lives as though he loved him, it is not right for you to demand the other element; it is not right that he should be required to have exact, clearly-defined beliefs; it is not right that he should be called upon to give all the philosophical reasons why Jesus Christ stands central in the universe, or why the life and sufferings and death of Christ are atoning in their power. For I hold that if one loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and accepts him as his Saviour, that is the essential thing. Although it would be better for him if he could add the other element, he can get along without it. He can live safely without it, and he can die safely without it. You cannot take a mere intellectual belief in Christ and be saved by it; but if Christ is presented to the heart by faith you can live and die and be saved by that. Though you are better off with the intellectual element, yet if it is not there you may be saved, provided Christ dwells in your heart by faith.

In the day of Christ, some men took him by the senses, and some rejected him. Now-a-days some men take Christ by intellectual apprehension. If it is vitalized by another and more important feeling, it is admirable. Without being thus vitalized, it is of very little use. It is a light that will condemn one by and by. But no man takes the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and love,—in other words, no man takes him by an experimental knowledge, no man takes him by a personal enthusiasm of allegiance,—that he does not take him substantially right, and in satisfying forms.

Christ is not divine to us, then, by a well-formed idea of divinity. It is the worship of love that makes him divine. There is many a woman who loves a man as if he were divine. Although she does not intellectually think he is divine, she feels as though he was. That is to say, she looks up to him. For women love up if they can, and never down if they can help it. There is many a man that stood heroic before the wife; and up to him went enthusiasm, and affection, and every-

thing that was in her heart to give. If he had been very God she could not have given more. He was her ideal. He was to her a God. If you had called upon her to define her feeling, she would not have been able to do it. If you had asked her if she thought he was divine, she would have said "No." Intellectually she did not think he was divine; but her heart made him divine: she wrongfully made him her idol.

There are many and many hearts that turn toward the Lord Jesus Christ with an enthusiasm of love, with a clasping of affection, with an entire allegiance, with a hope, a yearning, a desire, that carries with it everything which their heart has to give; and they have been so educated that if you say to them, "Do you think he is divine?" they cannot say that they believe him to be so; but their heart is making him divine all the time: and the loving worship of Jesus as divine, is a true worship. By the heart, man believes unto salvation; and there is many and many a man who may err in his speculative ideas, but whose heart makes correction for all his mistakes, if it is really and truly, with all its power and enthusiasm, fixed on the Saviour, and loves him.

Whoever so loves, then, need not be afraid to translate his love into words. As a man may love Christ in his heart as if he were God, although in terms he denies that he is God, his intellect being weak, and in bondage, but his heart being free, and interpreting more nobly than his understanding, and transcending it, taking the place of it, indeed; so I say to such persons, who are restrained, oftentimes, from avowing that they worship Christ as God, You need not be afraid to bear witness, if you can, that Christ is all that God could be to you in your conception. If instead of Christ you should put Jehovah there, would you feel any more love? No. Would you feel any more singleness of purpose to serve him? No. Would you be any more zealous in serving him? No. Could you trust him more utterly than you trust Christ? No. Are not all your best feelings consciously excited in you by the thought of Christ, by the presence of Christ, and by the truth as it is in Christ? Yes. And although you see manifold inconsistencies and imperfections in yourself, and live far below your ideal, are you not conscious that about that name your best experiences, the very best things your soul knows, cluster every day? Yes. Then you need not be afraid to put the name on that Being. You need not be afraid to crown him. Your heart has crowned him already. You have made him your Chief, your Leader, your Guide. You have ascribed to him, not by thought but by affection, everything that constitutes allegiance to divinity. Your heart is worshipping him.

What is worship? It is not merely bowing down and saying prayers. It is not merely the ascription of this, that or the other qual-

ity which may come in. But he who pours forth his heart, his best feelings, and gives himself to another in all his nobler nature, worships. And I think there are thousands of persons that the stress of controversy has driven away from the *name* of Christ, whom the grace of God has brought back to the *substance*. I believe that there are thousands of persons who feel the drawing of Christ's great heart, that is drawing men as unconsciously to them as the planets in the heavens draw the tides. The ocean does not know what ails it; but it swings to and fro, following the planets, going out and coming in, obeying the direction of the power that is exerted upon them from above. And thousands of hearts in every community, conscious of their sinfulness, and conscious of their need, look aloft, and behold the one name of Christ Jesus; and to him they give their thought, and their zeal, and their soul. They live in him, and trust in him. His name is the sweetest name in dying. It is music in the sinner's ear. And why not call Him divine?

Do you think that God the Father, who so loved the world, while yet it was his enemy, as to give his only begotten Son to die for it, is so narrow and jealous that, when you are with all your heart loving and following Jesus, if you make a mistake in a name or philosophy, he will be angry at it? If you are giving your soul to Christ you are doing the best you can; and the mistake of a name or a philosophy is not going to be material with you. Oh, that they who think they will be saved because they intellectually *believe* in the divinity of Christ, could be alarmed and aroused! That will not save them. Oh, that those who have all the glow of love in their souls, and who yet think, "I do not dare to call my Saviour divine," could be undeceived, and break away from these shackles, and these traditional prejudices, and come out into the light and liberty of the sons of God! He who loves God under any name, and follows him, and yields allegiance, and *enthusiastic* allegiance, to him, is salvable. For it is the love of God that redeems us, and cleanses us, and leads us with an infallible light.

Take these simple forms of words:

"Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches." "Is stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Take these simple declarations, and translate them into your life. Ask not yourself what it is going to do to you, or where it is going to carry you. Simply *do it*.

Do you suppose it is possible for you to love Christ in such an intimate way as that; do you suppose it is possible for you to be identified with him as a branch is to a vine; do you suppose it is possible for you to live so that you can say of him, "He is my Alpha and

Omega, he is my first and my last, he is my food and my drink," and do it all your life long,—and then have anything left over and above that, which the soul can do for any other being higher than he? Have you not spent the force of life when you have fulfilled these commands that lie upon the face of Scripture?

Let me put it in another form. Suppose a man, of every excellence, noble in form and feature, and endowed with every generous disposition and worthy aspiration, should meet with one cast down; suppose that through the stress of temptation, through the wail of woe that is in the world, some soul had been thrall'd and soiled, but yet, being brought out by him into the companionship of holy thoughts, had begun to seek a better way; suppose this noble nature drawing near to her, should instruct her from day to day, until all her soul began to rise up to a higher plane, until she began to see how hateful her past life was; suppose that now he should say to her, "Come to me every day, that where I am you may be also;" suppose he should say to her, "Come freely, for my thoughts live in you;" suppose he say to her, "I want you, after this, to consider your life as so twined with mine, that we are growing on one root, and that you are a branch of me;" suppose, still holding her fluttering soul, she in her silence wondering what such words could mean, but intensely excited and lifted up, and coming to a nobler and nobler apprehension of truth and fidelity and purity, he should say to her, "Now think of me always; think of me when the morning breaks—let me be the bright and morning star to you; think of me in the twilight—let me be also the evening star to you; think of me in all times of joy and sorrow; I will never leave you nor forsake you. You are mine, and mine forever." Suppose this should go on for weeks and months, until her whole soul had gone out and twined itself with his being; and suppose, at last, when she had given everything she had to give, he should turn upon her, and say, "What! do you suppose it is right for you to love and worship me in this way? You must look higher than to me. You must not have such a clasping adoration as this for me. I must go. I must leave you. I cannot have you. You must find some other support. You must put your trust in something higher than I am."—I ask you if that would not be using the divinest elements in the human soul for the worst betrayal which it is possible for one being to commit upon another?

If, when I rise in the last day, and look upon Jesus Christ, I may not cast my crown at his feet, then let me die in ignorance of his name. For he has told me that he is mine, and that I am his. He has said that he dwells in my heart, and has told me to come into his heart. He has called himself by every sweet name. Nature itself is precious to me because I associate it in so many ways with him. There is no-

thing in the day or in the night or in the year, that has not been sanctified and made use of as a love-term for the Lord Jesus Christ. And now may I not love him, so that by love I shall hold on through life, and go through the ford of death? And when I rise on the other side, am I to be rebuked because it is idolatry? Who taught me to worship him? What if he did not use the word *worship*; did he not tell me to love him? Did he not tell me to cling to him? Did he not tell me to aspire toward him? Did he not open to me everything in him that was sweet and attractive? And had I not a right to let my heart go out to him in simplicity and trust? And am I to be cast out in the last day because I worshipped the wrong one?

Oh, poor bewildered soul! do not be afraid. There is no such rock in the harbor where you are going. Love on, love more; and do not fear that in the last day you will find that you have put the crown on the wrong head. Crown the Lord Jesus Christ—*crown him Lord of all*—and you are safe in worshipping him. Love him, and he will take care of you. Dismiss your jealousies. Dismiss your fears, and your distress. Only be sorry that you do not love enough, and that your life does not conform enough to love.

God grant that every one of us may stand to repeat these words:

"They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We thank thee, our Father, for all thy care of love which thou hast taught us. We thank thee that thou hast caused the teachings of experience to converge upon thee. And whatever we have learned to know of the heart in all its relations of home; whatever we have seen of love between children and parents, and friends most loving, is but the faint and far away instruction of thy providence. When thou bringest by the Holy Spirit the knowledge of Jesus Christ to us, then thou dost enkindle all these knowledges; then thou dost lift up our souls into a higher sphere of experience. And now we know what is the full meaning of all this alphabetic experience. We are taught to love thee with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and to rejoice in it, and to find in it our perfect liberty; to find in it the hidden experience of power; to find in it all joy and perfect peace.

We thank thee that thou art granting unto some the more perfect knowledge of this royal way of life. We thank thee that there are some who have found the King's palace, though they only walk before it, and do not see his royal presence. Some there are that sit in the garden and have glimpses as he passes to and fro within. And some there are that stand upon the threshold and behold his comely presence, and yet do not go in. And some there are that stand within, and yet as servants. And some there are that are admitted to his presence, and that hear him say. Henceforth I call you not servants but friends. And some there are that abide with him; and he knoweth them. Thrice blessed are they. Oh that we were of their number! Oh that we were within, and always within, and always hearing thee, and seeing thee, and loving thee, and rejoicing in thee, and rejoiced over. For what can hurt those who are so surrounded by thine arms! What can pierce them or reach to disturb their settled peace? All the earth might weep; but they are lifted in thy divine strength above sorrow. Yea, in sorrow is sweetness to them. They learn to suffer with rejoicings. How precious are the revelations of thyself to those who have the secret of God! How are their lives as choral music! How often is mourning turned to the sweet melody of minor music? Lord, art thou accessible unto all? May others come? Wilt thou show thy face to those who walk past the palace, and are without? Wilt thou not go forth and speak unto the people, and to them that throng the streets? Thou that didst teach in the temple, didst teach upon the hillside. Thou that didst teach in Jerusalem, didst also teach in Samaria, despised as it was. Thou that didst reason with the priests, and offer the Pharisees salvation, didst suffer the publicans and harlots to come unto thee; and thou wert most merciful and gracious unto them, and some of them found that peace which passeth all understanding. And art thou not the same yesterday, to-day and forever, dwelling in an innocuous flame of love—flame of love that never burns but purifies? Art thou not shining forth as the sun, thy symbol, is, for all—for the poorest; for the most needy; for all that need and will take?

Grant, we beseech of thee, this day thy sovereign love to all those that, by ignorance, by bondage, or by bias and hindrance, are kept from their best estate. Thou must draw them. Draw them, we beseech of thee, not by compulsion, and by strange hands, and violent forces: draw them as the sun draws forth the flowers in the garden, that come out they know not why. Draw them by thy love, that they may find that secret way between their souls and God, which, once open, shall never be stepped again.

Oh teach every one that is weary to find the place of rest. Teach all those that are oppressed with guilt to know where their clearance is. Teach all those that are in despondency and in the borders of despair to look up and realize that a great light has risen upon them. Teach all those that are made to know their folly, and to feel their weakness, and to despise themselves at times, and at other times to cast themselves recklessly away as if all strife were vain for them, to find where their succor is. May they behold Jesus bearing the lambs in his bosom—the Shepherd that guides by hand, by voice, by rod, and carries as well. And we pray that there may be none that shall count themselves unworthy of thee, of thy notice, of thy care. For thou, O Physician!

wilt not despise any. Thou wilt undertake for the most sick, and those that are nearest unto death, and thou wilt recover them, and bring them back to love again.

Grant we pray thee, then, that those who lie about the pool waiting and looking wistfully for some one to help them down, may hear thy voice saying to them, Wilt thou be made whole? And grant that there may be many souls to-day that shall lift themselves up in a holy expectation, and come forth in a blessed exaltation, saying to those around about them, See what the Lord hath done for me. Grant that hard hearts may be broken, and obdurate hearts turned back. Grant that there may be relencings of will, new purposes, and holier ones, more fervent prayers, and more sincere vows than have been made before. And oh! that those who have often thronged thy sanctuary, and have registered vows there, which are forgotten; oh! that those who look back upon many and many promises made in times of darkness and trouble, which have never been kept; oh! that those who look back upon times of sickness when death came near to take them, upon promises made to God, everyone of which has been broken—oh! that they might look back to-day and think upon all these things, and renew these promises, and fulfill them speedily, with sorrow and contrition, with confession of sin and humiliation. O that there might be found many to cast themselves upon the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus to-day. And may thy Spirit illumine and sanctify and cleanse, and fill with all joy and peace. And may thy name, thus praised in the heavens above, be praised on earth responsively. And may many join that song who shall never cease to sing its numbers with ever-growing strains until they sing that nobler song in heaven.

Bless, not us alone, but all the churches that wait upon thee to-day. Grant that thy people upon earth may cease to divide the garment of Christ. Grant that that which is of Christ in us may be more unspeakably precious than all the rest of the things in this world. Grant that we may be delivered from arrogance and from selfishness. Grant that we may be as tender toward one another as thou art toward us. Forgiven every day, living on thy mercy, may we learn at last to keep our hands from our brother's throat. And we pray that thou wilt cause everywhere that spirit of tenderness and sympathy and gentleness and divine love to glow, that it may overcome, as a mighty divine power, pride and arrogance, and every evil and hateful thing. Grant that holiness may prevail in the world, and all flesh see thy salvation.

Which we ask through Jesus the beloved, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Grant, Almighty God, thy blessing to rest upon the truth which we have spoken. Grant that it may be as a word from God. And with divine illumination and divine inspiration, lift us up from our low estate. Lift us up from the poor teachings of the household. Give us the clearer light of thine own Spirit, and bring us into that personal communion with Jesus by which our heart shall be changed to love and our life illumined by faith. Thee and thee only do we trust. In thy name will we live; and in thy name will we die; and if need be we will perish in thy name. For thou art to us all in all. O blessed and atoning Saviour! we thank thee for thyself. We thank thee for that goodness which has brought us into personal love to thee. We thank thee for all the cheer and comfort which we have in it. We thank thee that it makes our bed in sickness; that it smooths our road in adversity; that it charms and cheers us in the dreariest scenes of life. We thank thee that we are enlarged and ennobled by that which thou dost give to us of thyself. Still may we cling to thee. Still may we love thee; and loving live, and loving die, that we may live again in an immortality of love. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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